

Suriname

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

Statistics on the number of working children under 15 in Suriname are unavailable.⁴⁴¹⁶ According to an ILO survey, children work in agriculture, fishing, timber production, mining, domestic service, construction, the furniture industry, and as street vendors.⁴⁴¹⁷ Young Maroon children work in the agricultural and transportation sectors.⁴⁴¹⁸ The ILO found that while hours of work vary substantially, 41 percent of those surveyed worked more than 5 hours per day. Children also worked without adult supervision in some cases.⁴⁴¹⁹ The commercial sexual exploitation of girls and boys exists in Suriname.⁴⁴²⁰ There were reports of girls being trafficked to Suriname from Brazil, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and Guyana for this purpose. Some of these victims were then trafficked to Europe for sexual exploitation.⁴⁴²¹ Internal trafficking for the purposes of domestic servitude and sexual exploitation also exists,⁴⁴²² and the sexual exploitation of Maroon girls in the interior of the country is a concern.⁴⁴²³

The Constitution of Suriname mandates free and compulsory primary education.⁴⁴²⁴ Under the Compulsory School Attendance Act, the government is required to provide all children the opportunity to attend school between the ages of 7 and 12.⁴⁴²⁵ Despite this guarantee, most public schools impose school fees,⁴⁴²⁶ or access is limited due to a lack of teachers, building facilities and transportation.⁴⁴²⁷ In 2002, the

⁴⁴¹⁶ This statistic is not available from the data sources that are used in this report. Please see the "Data Sources and Definitions" section for information about sources used. Reliable data on the worst forms of child labor are especially difficult to collect given the often hidden or illegal nature of the worst forms, such as the use of children in the illegal drug trade, prostitution, pornography, and trafficking. As a result, statistics and information on children's work in general are reported in this section. Such statistics and information may or may not include the worst forms of child labor. For more information on the definition of working children and other indicators used in this report, please see the "Data Sources and Definitions" section of this report.

⁴⁴¹⁷ As part of the survey, 142 key informants, 169 working children between the ages of 4 and 17, and 52 parents or guardians were interviewed. Marten Schalkwijk and Wim van den Berg, *Suriname The Situation of Children in Mining, Agriculture, and other Worst Forms of Child Labour: A Rapid Assessment*, ILO Subregional Office for the Caribbean, Port of Spain, November 2002, 1,30, 46, and 52; available from http://www.ilocarib.org.tt/system_links/link6tst.html.

⁴⁴¹⁸ U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *reporting*, June 8, 2004. Maroon people are descendants of African slaves and have a distinct culture based on African and Amerindian traditions. See Rainforest Foundation US, *Suriname Background*, 2004 [cited July 1, 2005]; available from <http://www.rainforestfoundation.org/1surinameback.html>.

⁴⁴¹⁹ Marten Schalkwijk and Wim van den Berg, *Suriname The Situation of Children in Mining, Agriculture, and other Worst Forms of Child Labour*, 49.

⁴⁴²⁰ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - 2004: Suriname*, Washington D.C., February 28, 2005, section 6d; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41775.htm>.

⁴⁴²¹ U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report-2005: Suriname*, Washington, D.C., June, 2005; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2005/46616>.

⁴⁴²² Some children are promised work in cities but are tricked into commercial sexual exploitation or domestic servitude. Other children are trafficked to mining camps in the country's remote interior for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation. *Ibid.*

⁴⁴²³ U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *reporting*, June 8, 2004.

⁴⁴²⁴ Right to Education, *Constitutional Guarantees: Suriname*, [database online] [cited October 5, 2005]; available from <http://www.right-to-education.org/content/consuarant/suriname.html>.

⁴⁴²⁵ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Initial Report of States Parties Due in 1995, CRC/C/28/Add.11*, prepared by Government of Suriname, pursuant to Article 44 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, September 1998, para. 118; available from <http://www.hri.ca/fortherecord2000/documentation/tbodies/crc-c-28-add11.htm>.

⁴⁴²⁶ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports-2005: Suriname*, section 5.

⁴⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*

gross primary enrollment rate was 126 percent and the net primary enrollment rate was 97 percent.⁴⁴²⁸ Gross and net enrollment ratios are based on the number of students officially registered in primary school and therefore do not necessarily reflect actual school attendance. Primary school attendance statistics are not available for Suriname.⁴⁴²⁹ Problems within the education system include an inefficient allocation of resources, low teacher quality, outdated curricula, a shortage of instructional materials, poor school facilities, and limited evaluation and monitoring of school performance.⁴⁴³⁰ In addition, classes are taught in Dutch, which is a second language for many students.⁴⁴³¹

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The Labor Act sets the minimum age for employment at 14 years.⁴⁴³² Under Article 18 of the Labor Act, children who have reached age 12 may work only if it is necessary for training; does not have high physical or mental demands; and is not dangerous.⁴⁴³³ Article 20 of the Labor Act prohibits children from performing night work or work that is dangerous to their health, life, or morals.⁴⁴³⁴ Children below the age of 15 are prohibited from working on fishing boats. Violations of child labor laws are punishable by fines and up to 12 months in prison.⁴⁴³⁵ Parents who permit their children to work, in violation of child labor laws, may be prosecuted.⁴⁴³⁶

The worst forms of child labor may be prosecuted under different statutes in Suriname. The Constitution prohibits forced labor.⁴⁴³⁷ Prostitution is illegal,⁴⁴³⁸ and procuring a minor for the purpose of sex is prohibited and punishable with up to three years in prison.⁴⁴³⁹ Under the 1987 Constitution (amended in 1992), military service is compulsory for all people between the ages of 18 and 35 years. However, according to the Surinamese Government, this requirement has been repealed and military service is no longer compulsory.⁴⁴⁴⁰ There are statutes that prohibit “white slavery,” migrant smuggling, and pimping that pertain only to women and children.⁴⁴⁴¹ The Government’s Anti-trafficking Commission, comprised of representatives from the ministries of Justice and Police, Labor, Defense, and Foreign Affairs, is

⁴⁴²⁸ UNESCO Institute for Statistics, <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/TableView/tableView.aspx?ReportId=51> (Gross and Net Enrolment Ratios, Primary; accessed October 2005). For an explanation of gross primary enrollment rates that are greater than 100 percent, please see the definition of gross primary enrollment rates in the “Data Sources and Definitions” section of this report.

⁴⁴²⁹ This statistic is not available from the data sources that are used in this report. Please see the “Data Sources and Definitions” section for information about sources used.

⁴⁴³⁰ The Inter-American Development Bank, *Basic Education Improvement Project*, Loan Proposal, 1521/OC-SU, December 17, 2003, 2-6; available from <http://www.iadb.org/exr/doc98/apr/lcsuri.htm>.

⁴⁴³¹ There are 26 languages actively spoken in Suriname and the current curriculum does not take this fact into account. *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴⁴³² U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports-2005: Suriname*, section 6d. There is a gap between the last compulsory year of schooling (age 12) and the minimum age for employment (age 14). See U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *reporting*, June 8, 2004.

⁴⁴³³ Arnold Halfhide Ambassador of Suriname to the United States, letter to USDOL official, November 29, 2000.

⁴⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴³⁵ U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *reporting*, September 8, 2003.

⁴⁴³⁶ U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *reporting*, June 8, 2004.

⁴⁴³⁷ *Constitution of Suriname 1987, with 1992 reforms*, Article 15; available from <http://www.georgetown.edu/pdba/Constitutions/Suriname/english.html>.

⁴⁴³⁸ Educational Broadcasting Corporation Inc., *Dying to Leave*, [online] 2004 [cited June 16, 2005]; available from http://www.pbs.org/wnet/wideangle/shows/dying/map_suriname.html. See also U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports-2005: Suriname*, Section 5.

⁴⁴³⁹ Article 305 as cited in ILO-IPEC Official, email communication, May 3, 2004 to USDOL Official, May 3, 2004.

⁴⁴⁴⁰ Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, *Global report 2004-Suriname*, online, November 17, 2004; available from http://www.child-soldiers.org/document_get.php?id=837. See also *Constitution of Suriname*, article 180. See also UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Initial Reports of States Parties: Suriname*, 19.

⁴⁴⁴¹ Article 307 of the Penal Code. Protection Project, *The Protection Project Human Rights Report of the Americas-Suriname*, online, 2004; available from <http://www.protectionproject.org/main1.htm>.

responsible for combating the issue of trafficking in persons.⁴⁴⁴² A special police anti-trafficking unit has worked with officials in neighboring Curacao and Guyana to successfully arrest and convict child traffickers.⁴⁴⁴³

The Ministry of Labor's Department of Labor Inspections enforces and implements child labor laws.⁴⁴⁴⁴ However, according to the U.S. Department of State, staff shortages and lack of funding have resulted in inadequate child labor investigations, which rarely take place outside of urban areas.⁴⁴⁴⁵ The Labor Inspection office does not enforce the laws in the informal sector.⁴⁴⁴⁶

Current Government Policies and Programs to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor

In 2002, the Government of Suriname developed an Action Plan for children (2002-2006) which addresses childhood policies and the worst forms of child labor.⁴⁴⁴⁷ In 2004, the Anti-trafficking Commission issued a National Action Plan to combat trafficking in persons.⁴⁴⁴⁸ Through May 2005, the government coordinated with ILO-IPEC on the second phase of a regional child labor project in the English and Dutch-speaking Caribbean. The project, funded by the Government of Canada, raised awareness about the worst forms of child labor, guided the work of the national child labor committee, conducted a review of relevant child labor legislation to identify gaps that permit the exploitation of children, and helped the government to identify hazardous occupations consistent with ILO Convention 182.⁴⁴⁴⁹ ILO-IPEC also works with the government to address exploitative domestic labor, commercial sexual exploitation of children, and child labor in agriculture.⁴⁴⁵⁰

Selected Child Labor Measures Adopted by Governments	
Ratified Convention 138	
Ratified Convention 182	
ILO-IPEC Associated Member	✓
National Plan for Children	✓
National Child Labor Action Plan	
Sector Action Plan	

The Justice Department has been reviewing national legislation on child abuse and exploitation to ensure its conformity with the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. The Bureau for Child Development, an office within the Foundation for Human Development, provides training to the Department of Justice, the police, and health workers to sensitize them to child rights and child abuse issues. This activity is now a standard

⁴⁴⁴² U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports-2005: Suriname*, section 5.

⁴⁴⁴³ U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report-2005: Suriname*.

⁴⁴⁴⁴ U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *reporting*, June 8, 2004.

⁴⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁴⁷ The government established a steering committee composed of representatives from relevant agencies to coordinate and implement the plan. See Department of Labour, Technological Development, and Environment, *Request for Information on Efforts by Certain Countries to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labour*, October 11, 2002. See also ILO Subregional Office for the Caribbean, *Child Labour in Suriname*, 2002; available from http://www.ilocarib.org.tt/infosources/child_labour/fact_sheets/SurFS.pdf. See also ILO Subregional Office for the Caribbean, *Project Overview*, [online] [cited October 5, 2005]; available from <http://www.ilocarib.org.tt/childlabour/printing-versions/project-overview-print.htm>.

⁴⁴⁴⁸ U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *reporting*, Washington, D.C., January 25, 2005.

⁴⁴⁴⁹ The project was implemented in Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Bahamas, Suriname, Belize, and Guyana. ILO Caribbean Office, *Identification, Elimination and Prevention of the worst Forms of Child Labour in the Anglophone-and Dutch-Speaking Caribbean*, [online] [cited October 3, 2005]; available from <http://www.ilocarib.org.tt/projects/index.htm>. See also ILO-IPEC Official.

⁴⁴⁵⁰ ILO-IPEC, *¿Dónde Trabaja IPEC?* [online] 2005 [cited October 3, 2005]; available from <http://www.oit.org.pe/ipcc/pagina.php?seccion=27&pagina=164>.

component of police cadet training.⁴⁴⁵¹ Various unions subsidized by the Ministry of Labor conduct education campaigns on the worst forms of child labor targeting school teachers, students, caregivers and public and private sector officials.⁴⁴⁵²

With support from the U.S. Department of Justice, the Government of Suriname, including officials from the Ministry of Justice and Police, received training on preventing and prosecuting trafficking in persons victims.⁴⁴⁵³ The Ministry also launched a one-year pilot project to establish a centralized Trafficking in Persons Unit as part of the Suriname Police Corps.⁴⁴⁵⁴ The Public Prosecutor's Office operates a "Special Victims Unit" and telephone hotline to assist victims of trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.⁴⁴⁵⁵ The Police conducted raids in Paramaribo in areas of high incidence of child labor, including streets, nightclubs, brothels and casinos.⁴⁴⁵⁶ At the end of 2004, a government official was arrested for trafficking female victims into Suriname for commercial sexual exploitation.⁴⁴⁵⁷

The Ministry of Education and Community Development is implementing an IDB-financed project to improve the quality and internal efficiency of the education sector. Project activities include the expansion of compulsory education from six to ten years; the design of new curricula; teacher training reform and the development and provision of didactic materials; the rehabilitation of school infrastructure; and improved capacity of the Ministry of Education.⁴⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁴⁵¹ ECPAT International, *Suriname*, in ECPAT International, [database online] [cited October 5, 2005]; available from http://www.ecpat.net/eng/Ecpat_inter/projects/monitoring/online_database/index.asp.

⁴⁴⁵² U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports-2005: Suriname*, section 6d.

⁴⁴⁵³ U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *reporting*, January 25, 2005.

⁴⁴⁵⁴ The project involves the identification of trafficking in persons victims and the investigation and prosecution of traffickers. The project also includes greater scrutiny of aliens soliciting access at ports of entry and visa applicants through improved interview techniques. *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁵⁵ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports-2005: Suriname*, section 5.

⁴⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁵⁷ U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *reporting*, January 25, 2005. See also U.S. Embassy- Paramaribo, *reporting*, January 25, 2005.

⁴⁴⁵⁸ The Inter-American Development Bank, *Basic Education Improvement Project*.